



Carers Strategy

2022–2027

Sunderland
City Council

“Our vision is Everyone in Sunderland will have happy, healthy lives with no one left behind”

Foreword

It is with pride we introduce our Carers Strategy for 2022–2027.

This strategy describes our priorities for carers of all ages, to enable them to live healthy and happy lives.

The strategy has been produced using valuable feedback from local carers, and we have identified our priorities based on the feedback we have received from carers.

We are aware as a partnership that we have more work to do in Sunderland to improve the health and wellbeing of carers. This strategy will form the basis of our work for the next five years, and we will continue to work with carers and partners to create a multi-agency action plan to drive forward our improvements for carers.

We recognise the significant and vital contribution that carers make in our local communities and the city looking after family and friends. We want to recognise and value all that carers do and work with them to ensure the support within the city meets their current and future needs acknowledging the level of responsibility often felt by carers to care for their loved ones. We want to support this caring role whilst preventing any detriment that this may have on the carers own health, employment opportunities and aspirations.

We are committed to working with local carers and partners to create a positive environment within the city for carers, including:

- Improve the way we identify the role of carers, particularly those hidden carers who do not identify themselves in this role
- See and recognise the valuable contribution that carers make to our city and work with them as partners with a significant contribution to make to shape support available across the city
- Improve the information, advice and guidance offer we have available to carers to ensure that information is accessible in a variety of formats to all carers when they need it
- Building capacity in our services to enable carers have a break from their caring role, to help maintain their health and wellbeing and enable them to fulfill their own aspirations
- Ensure that support is personal and is based upon individual need

We will continue to build on the work we have started with carers and partners to ensure that throughout the implementation of this strategy, carers continue be engaged and consulted on delivery and can feedback on progress being made



Graham King

Director of Adult Social Care



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Cllr Kelly Chequer

Chair of Health and Wellbeing Board and Portfolio Holder for Healthy City



Introduction

Thank you

This strategy would not be possible without the involvement and dedication from carers, partners and stakeholders across the city who have helped to shape the development of this strategy.

We want to recognise the invaluable contributions that carers make every day to the lives of friends, family members, neighbours, and members of their community, and create a strategy that reflects the needs of carers, and the available in Sunderland.

Carer definition

A carer is someone who provides support to family or friends who could find it difficult or unable to manage without this help. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems. All the care they give is unpaid.

A carer could be a spouse, partner, parent, sibling, child, friend, or any other relation. Anybody from any background and of any age can be a carer and each carer's experience is unique to their own circumstances.

Just as the reasons why someone becomes a carer vary greatly, the variety of tasks that a carer takes on can be broad. They can include practical tasks such as cooking, cleaning, washing up, ironing, paying bills, financial management and engaging appropriate services; personal care such as bathing, dressing, lifting, administering medication, and collecting prescriptions; and emotional support such as listening, advocacy, problem solving, motivating and companionship.

Taking on a caring role can mean facing a life of challenges and rewards, each carer's experience will be different. Many carers go unidentified until many years into their caring role and a number of carers are unaware that help is available to them.

Facts and figures:

- Carers UK estimates there are 13.6 million carers in the UK
- 1.4 million provide more than 50 hours of care per week
- Carers save the economy £132 billion per year

This is often to the detriment of the carer with:

- 72% of carers responding to Carers UK's State of Caring 2018 Survey said they had suffered mental ill health because of caring
- 61% said they had suffered physical ill health because of caring
- 8 in 10 people caring for loved ones say they have felt lonely or socially isolated

In Sunderland we know:

- At the last 2011 Census there were 32,531 people who recognised themselves as a carer, of whom 8359 spend more than 50 hours per week in their caring role
- Of those caring 2437 were aged 0 – 24 with 621 being under 16 years of age which is likely to be a significant under representation
- There were 6814 people aged 65+ who recognized themselves as carers of which over 50% were caring for more than 50 hours per week
- Data from our commissioned service, The Carers Centre, shows at any point throughout the year in 21/22 73% of carers accessing support are female
- Data from the commissioned service also shows that the age range accessing the service is roughly in line with the findings within the census information in terms of age groupings

What does the strategy mean?

The strategy details how the Council and its partners deliver against their commitment to improving the lives of all carers. It will inform other strategies and ensure that meeting the needs of carers is embedded in all services across the council, its partners, and those services it commissions externally. This strategy will be underpinned by an action plan of how we will work across the city to improve identification and support to carers over the next 5 years.

Caring responsibilities look different for each carer and that is why our strategy is for all carers in Sunderland.

This strategy has been shaped by the voice and experience of carers and the organisations which support carers to ensure that the priorities for the future are based upon what is important.

We gathered information in a variety of ways including (but not limited to):

- Holding a range of face-to-face sessions across the community
- Attending events including Carers week
- Series of online and postal surveys.
- Articles in newsletters and SGC resident's emails
- Social media posts

The statistical feedback in our priorities is based on our consultation on our 4 key priorities:

- Identifying and recognising carers
- Information, advice, and guidance
- Communication and carer engagement
- Accessibility and Range of Services

What carers have told us

I have not had any support in fact some of the conversations I've had with numerous support agencies have left me utterly depressed and feeling that there is no real support out there

Nothing accessed
struggling to get help

Making sure you
are heard and
understood

Knowing how to
access advice and
information

Navigating health
care and support
systems

I have had no positive experience
of attempting to access services in
Sunderland

Fortunately, I worked in Social Service so I knew how to access support, if I hadn't that knowledge, I would have struggled for information about support services

Our vision for our local carers

No carer should be left behind because they are providing support to someone and we recognise that our carers will face challenges with their own health and wellbeing, finance, education and employment, housing and simply having the time to enjoy the things that interest them.

We want carers to live healthy and happy lives in Sunderland and say:

Professionals listen to what I have to say and respect my input

I am able to easily access good quality information, advice and guidance in a way that suits me

Support is available and accessible that meets my needs and supports me in my caring role and to achieve my own aspirations

I am able to confidently access health and social care services when I need them

I have control over my role as a carer

I feel supported

I lead a healthy and happy life

Our strategic priorities

Identification and recognition

We want carers to be able to say

“I am listened by professionals and my input is respected”

Following consultation, we found:

- 64.9% of carers report that they have been included or consulted in discussion about the person they care for, a reduction from previous years at 76.5%
- 62% of carers report facing challenges in making sure they are heard and understood
- 29% of carers feel they would benefit from some training to assist with their caring role
- During the Covid pandemic 50.1% of carers felt they were not involved or consulted as much as they wanted to be, in discussions about the support or services provided to the person they care for
- Carers report not being consulted or fully informed of the progress or changes in relation to the person they care for
- Carers report services were changed or closed during the pandemic with no consultation or discussion leaving them feeling isolated and undervalued
- Carers report professionals need to do better in recognising the role they provide and the impact this has on their own lives and how they communicate
- Carers report lack of consistent and informative communication from professionals

Our actions to improve identification and recognition

- Work with partners and local employers to raise awareness with employers about the role of carers, carers rights and how to best support carers to enable them to maintain or move in to paid employment
- Work with the voluntary sector to further develop understanding of carers, the challenges they face and how and where they can be supported
- Work with partners to review the current training delivered to professionals across health and social care, to ensure that the role of carers is highlighted, and professionals understand the importance of involving carers, listening to, and respecting the voice of a carer
- Working with primary healthcare to improve identification of carers in GP practices and the support provided by primary healthcare to access information, support, and advice in their role as carer
- Work with acute hospitals to review how carers are identified and supported during the admission of a loved one, alongside how carers can be better involved in discharge planning

- Utilising the voluntary and community sector raise awareness of the caring role to enable self-identification and how information, advice and support can be accessed
- Work with partners and education settings across the city to raise awareness the about the role of carers, carers rights and how to best support carers to enable them to maintain or move into education
- Work with professionals and carers to develop a training package for carers to assist in their caring role



Information, advice and guidance

We want carers to be able to say

“I am able to easily access good quality information, advice and guidance in a way that suits me”

Following our consultation, we found:

- 55.9% of carers report they found it easy to find information on services
- 44.2% of carers report they have used information and advice services in the last 12 months
- 28% of carers report they require support to access information and advice to help maintain their caring role and family life
- 34.3% of carers have not accessed any information or advice in the last 12 months
- Carers report that more information should be available for young carers to help them progress education and employment opportunities
- Carers have told us they do not think there is sufficient information and support available on finance including charges for services and benefits
- Carers have expressed they would like to access information via a variety of routes including online, newsletter, letter, face to face and via telephone
- Carers have suggested an information pack is available particularly for new carers that offers information and support on what to expect, where they can access support for themselves and the person they care for and transition points in their lives
- Carers have said they do not feel the pathways and signposting to information are sufficiently clear or easy to navigate
- Carers report they have to contact multiple sources for information and often give up as it is too difficult when caring for someone
- Carers have told us when they have asked for information or support there are often delays in receiving this information

Our actions to improve information and advice

- Review information and advice services for carers with an emphasis on organisations collaborating, with key sources of information and support available out of hours
- Review and develop clearer online information, advice, and guidance for carers to access to understand what support is available, and how to access this
- Develop frontline staff knowledge and experience so they are better equipped to identify, support and signpost carers to the correct information
- Work with partners to further develop their knowledge and experience so they are better equipped to identify, support and signpost carers to the correct information

- Develop support services that address the needs of those carers who are in or want to return to education or paid employment
- Review the carers assessment process to identify where improvements can be made to ensure that this process enables carers to have the right support to plan for the future and access the correct financial support
- Work with partners to review how information on benefits and financial resilience and support can be made available more widely to ensure that carers are not disadvantaged by their caring role
- Work with health and social care partners and the voluntary sector to review how information sharing can be improved for carers
- Working with partners develop and implement a 'New to Caring' information pack



Communication and carer engagement

We want carers to be able to say

“I am kept up to date on changes that affect me or the person I care for in a timely manner and I am able to influence support available for carers”

Following our consultation, we found:

- 39.1% of carers were satisfied with social services
- 61% of carers confirmed they would like to be involved in further development of care and support for carers
- Carers report the way in which some communication is made can cause fear and uncertainty
- Carers report it would be helpful to understand the different stages of care and vocabulary used by different professionals as it can be confusing
- Carers report issues with timely responses to queries and requests for information
- Carers told us that some communication received included inaccurate or out of date information
- Carers describe the importance of being kept updated on new support or services available rather than having to research themselves when they have little time due to caring responsibilities
- Carers advise it is important that future planning within communication is important to enable them to actively plan for the future

Our actions to improve communication and carer engagement

- Working with partners review and develop a programme of ongoing carer feedback and involvement across key areas
- Working with partners develop and implement a ‘New to Caring’ information pack to include the different stages of caring
- Working with partners and carers identify and agree standards of communication to ensure clarity, removal of barriers and areas that may cause fear or confusion
- Review and improve future planning and communication around assessments and service provision
- Working with partners identify the barriers to timely, accurate and clear communication and develop a training programme for professionals to ensure standards are maintained
- Through the social prescribing workstream develop a means of keeping residents up to date on new and existing services



Accessibility and range of services

We want carers to be able to say:

“I receive the support I need, when I need it, that suits me as an individual in my caring role”

Following our consultation, we found:

- 27% of carers reported that they had as much social contact as they would like
- 64% of carers report they have been caring for the individual for in excess of 5 years
- 69.4% of carers report they spend time doing things they like but not enough with 17.7% reporting they never do anything that they enjoy
- 22.5% of carers report they are neglecting themselves
- 23.5% of carers report they have no encouragement or support
- 46% of carers report they need support with replacement care to enable carers breaks or to manage a crisis
- Carers have told us that a lot of services and support closed or reduced during Covid and has not been reinstated or restarted at the same level or at all
- Carers report since Covid they feel isolated, exhausted, and alone
- Carers have advised a specific lack of support and services for people with addictions
- Carers report not being able to take a break from their caring role to support their own physical and mental health
- Carers report difficulties accessing services due to availability of services

Our actions to improve accessibility and range of services

- Working with partners and carers review and redesign the commissioned services available for carers
- Working with partners enhance the range of services available for carers to support their health and wellbeing
- Review the services providing short break and replacement care across the city and develop accessible alternatives
- Develop and improve access to Direct Payments and Personal Health budgets for Carers to access the services they need when they need it
- Working with Public Health review the commissioned service for substance misuse and what support is available for carers as part of this service
- Working with partners and carers consider and propose a keep in touch service for carers in the city

Review and consider how the shared care service could be extended to offer respite and carers breaks.



What happens next?

In order to implement this strategy over the next five years we will work with carers, partners, and stakeholders to form an implementation group. This group will review the action plan, push forward the priorities, agree how and when the actions set out in this document will be delivered, coordinate the work, and monitor the outcomes.

We will involve carers, carers groups and forums in projects that come from the action plan so that their ideas and input are included. This will include young carers/young adult carers and carers in different circumstances, as needed for particular programmes of work.

The strategy and associated plans will be overseen by Carers Strategy Board where partners and Carers will be represented.

The strategy and action plan are to be approved by Sunderland Health and Wellbeing Board and progress updates will be given to the Board to review and challenge.





